

Red White and Blue (But Mostly Green) by Ember Nickel

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Summary: Erica has the entire situation under control. [Writing Rainbow - Blue treat for Etnoe.]

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For the prompt "New Minion Is Surprisingly Uncooperative Despite Being Brainwashed/Mindcontrolled."

"Don't be afraid," the newspaper old fart whispered. "It'll be over soon."

"It'd be over a lot faster if you stop *crushing* me," Erica pointed out, "I gotta catch my breath."

"Ssh," he said.

And then she felt it. The monster. It was cold, like the kind of days that Mom and Dad said it was too cold to snow which meant they would have to go to school even though it was *definitely* not safe for kids to be standing out at the bus stop in that kind of weather.

Welcome, little one, said the monster, inside her brain. *We've been waiting for you.*

Erica twitched. "Whaddaya mean, we? I thought you were just one monster." That's what Lucas and Dustin and the others had told her, that there was a big creepy monster that lived in a fantasy world trying to eat people. They had not warned her about more than one. She'd have to renegotiate terms.

All of...us.

The monster showed her pictures of people. The lazy lifeguard who was mostly interested in taking his shirt off. A bunch of old men from the newspaper place who didn't even care that there was a monster on the loose. A little old lady who felt lonely. They'd all been...different people, once, but then they were gone. Turned into the monster.

"Oh my God," said Erica. "Robin was right! You are a bunch of Communists!"

We're right here, said the monster. From Hawkins. *People you know.*

"I don't mean, like, from Russia, they've got their own problems." The Russians were creepy and weird and very disruptive to the supply flow of ice cream. But they were *human*. "You like, take over people and try to make them all the same. Don't you know what that does to a society? Nobody has any motivation, so you wind up sitting around freezing your butts off. No wonder you're so cold."

...*What?*

"This is the US of A, dude. People are different, 'cuz they're all...people. That's what makes us work. That's why we're successful and you're just...a monster."

We are stronger together than you'll ever be!

"Yeah, yeah. If I wanna be cold I'll go *buy* some ice cream. Actually I won't, I'm getting it for free, but you can just—"

The clammy sensation broke off, and Erica felt herself flung out of the abandoned shed. She landed near the sidewalk, bruised and annoyed.

"We gotta go!" Robin was yelling from the car. "Now now now!"

And then Dustin was dragging her up, and Lucas. And there was that weird girl, the one with the nosebleed. "What are you doing?" Erica protested. "I had it under control."

"Sure you did," said Lucas, shoving her into the car where she sat close up against Dustin. He smelled like middle-schooler. Gross. Robin revved the pedal and they pulled away.

"You're *welcome*," Erica pointed out. "And you all owe me one."

"You owe El," said Mike.

"It's okay," said nosebleed girl, her eyes still closed. "We make a good team."

Erica tilted against Dustin as they rounded a tight curve, then leaned back, enjoying the rush of freedom.